

Of the medicinal value of pepsine not a doubt can be entertained. Disappointment has, however, been frequently expressed that in many cases its administration has not been followed by all the good effects anticipated. Of this circumstance two explanations may be offered: first, that the pepsine used has not been in a fresh and active condition; and, second, that it is administered in all stomach affections, to many of which it is wholly unsuited, and in which it would be irrational to anticipate beneficial results.

The cases in which this remedy is indicated, and from which benefit frequently results, are those attended by slow and difficult digestion, arising from deficiency of the gastric juice. We believe that pepsine, rightly used, is an invaluable remedy, and that its discovery and isolation mark an important era in the treatment of dyspepsia.

THE BLISTERING AND EPISPASTIC PAPERS OF M. ALBESPEYRE.

These consist of—an epispastic paper, used for dressing blisters; a dulcifying paper, used for issues, causing neither smell nor pain; and blisters formed of an adhesive cloth without a plaster.

The epispastic paper for dressing blisters is prepared of four degrees of strength, under the designation of No. 1 feeble, No. 1, No. 2, and No. 3. No. 1 feeble, having a small quantity of salve upon it, possesses the least strength, and is suitable as a dressing for persons of very irritable temperament, and for children. No. 1 has rather more salve spread upon it, and is adapted for patients whose blisters have risen well. No. 2 is employed for those whose blisters do not draw sufficiently, and require stimulating. Whilst No. 3 possesses a still stronger drawing power, and is used only in cases where the blister has a tendency to dry up.

When we state that this paper has been in use for the last thirty years in France and many other countries, and has lately been employed in England with great advantage, enough is said to urge an extended trial of its good qualities. It keeps up an abundant and uniform discharge, without pain or heat; it prevents the formation of false membranes, or of white scurf or epithelium, which hinders the discharge; it produces no irritation of the urinary passages, and it causes no disagreeable smell. The paper, being thin, soft, and pliable, readily adheres to the surface of the blister, and never gets out of position.

The blisters in the form of adhesive cloth are an elegant preparation; they readily adhere to the skin, and produce vesication in a few hours (twelve at the furthest); and, if necessary, the same piece applied four or five times always produces the blistering effect.

In the cases in which these preparations have been tried in some of our hospitals and elsewhere, we learn that they have given great satisfaction from their cleanliness, and more especially their freedom from the irritation and discomfort of the blisters as ordinarily employed.

Correspondence.

"Audi alteram partem."

THE WALDITCH MURDER.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I am much gratified by your remarks in THE LANCET of last week regarding the poor unfortunate man Chas. Fooks, now under sentence of death in Dorchester Jail for the murder of his cousin, Joseph Stone; and if ever there was a case to which Royal clemency might be extended in mitigating the extreme penalty of the law, with consistency and in harmony with all the facts taken together, I feel assured that case is Fooks's—an ignorant (not wholly illiterate) man—the subject of delusions the most absurd, and without sufficient moral self-control either to reason himself out of his delusions or restrain his resentment of imaginary shafts directed against him. I have been his chief medical attendant for nearly seventeen years, and therefore must know something of his mental capacity as well as of his bodily ailments. I subjoin a short sketch, which may perhaps assist you in following up the philanthropic step you have taken in trying to have the Royal prerogative of the Crown extended towards him. While the marriage of

H. R. H. the Prince of Wales was being celebrated, at the same hour this poor victim of a homicidal impulse was on his trial; and the present might be urged as a befitting season for extending that mercy for which we pray.

I first saw Charles Fooks in May, 1846. He was brought to me by the late Wm. Devenish, Esq., under whom the family rented some land; and the history I then received of him was that he had been a long time out of health, and at length shut himself up in his bedroom, lined the door and windows with quilts and blankets to keep out currents of air, had his food carried to him in bed, and, except while taking it, kept his head under the bedclothes. From this position he was taken by Mr. Devenish and brought to me. He looked pale, felt languid, and thought himself in a very bad state—not fit, he said, to be out of his bed, and that no one but Mr. Devenish could have induced him to leave it; but that he was so kind, and such a good friend to his family, he could not refuse to comply with any request, though he thought no medical man could cure him. I carefully examined him without discovering any organic lesion. I entered him as a dyspeptic hypochondriac, and treated him accordingly.

One circumstance that occurred during our interview is worthy of note as showing the state of his nervous system then—viz., when I ordered him a shower-bath daily as an essential remedy in his treatment, he jumped to his feet, declaring that no man could induce him to have a shower-bath, for he was sure it would kill him! I got on my legs also, and quietly taking hold of his coat-breast, said in a stern manner: "Sir, if I order you to walk across the road in front of where you are now standing, and have a plunge-bath in that arbour as part of your cure, you must do it;" and I then walked out, leaving him and Mr. Devenish alone, who afterwards told me he sat down rather amazed, saying, "I see that is a most determined doctor; it won't do to trifle wi' he!"

The next day when I called, I found the shower-bath in his room, and had not the slightest difficulty in commanding obedience to all rules laid down for his observance. He was well enough to return home in between five and six weeks. I have seen him professionally from time to time ever since. On looking over my notes, I find his visits to me averaged about two every year. He also wrote me occasionally when he could not come to Weymouth; sometimes the writing appeared in the hand of a female, but signed "Chas. Fooks." All his letters were couched nearly in the same language, of which the following is a specimen:—

"Dear Sir,—I am terrible bad in my inside. Please send me something to go through me. It comes up very sour dark bile. I know I am bilious. My head is bad, but better after being sick, only I can get nothing to go through me as it ought. Please, Sir, write soon.—I am, &c.,

CHAS. FOOKS."

He complained nearly always of the same train of feelings—all the symptoms, in fact, of a confirmed dyspeptic. At one time he would fancy or feel himself filled with flatus, "ready to burst." Again he would complain of a coldness in his stomach, and no action whatever of the bowels. At another time he would tell me his "inside was in a burning fever, all dried up." Then he would call my attention to how thin he had become; that his food did him no good; he was "all gone to nothing."

During most of my interviews with him he complained of excessive weakness, and said he was often obliged to go in from his work in the fields, and lie down for an hour or two. I was impressed with the idea that he was a large eater, and often took more than the stomach could digest, and that his lowness of spirits and other morbid feelings on which he dwelt arose partly from this error in diet, though he would never admit that he took food in large quantities. Just like drunkards, who believe their illness may arise from any cause but the right one; in fact, drunkards will hardly ever admit that drink has anything whatever to do with their illness, though it may be from drink. Poor Fooks was not addicted to drink, but had all the symptoms which generally accompany dyspepsia—viz., indigestion, heartburn, pain of stomach and bowels, eructations with much flatulence, confined bowels, and sometimes vomiting. He often complained of his head and a sense of weight in his chest, all of which I referred to the same cause. These symptoms may, and often do, continue for years, nay throughout a man's life, without any very great aggravation of the morbid sensations; while, on the other hand, they sometimes lead (especially in a nervous and highly irritable temperament such as Fooks's is) to a morbid state of mind, in which everything seems going wrong, and a distrust is acquired in those in whom confidence was formerly placed; imaginary evils spring up, and fancies the most absurd arise in the bewildered

brain, which sometimes becomes sympathetically affected, and the patient often complains (as did Fooks) of headache, dimness of sight, noises in the ears with impaired hearing, loss of memory with confusion of thought, and incapacity of fixed attention for any length of time on any given subject.

There was a general irritability shown by Fooks on the last occasion on which he visited me (a month or five weeks before the fatal occurrence), an impatient wish expressed that the devil, or whatever it was that was inside of him, was driven out by strong medicines, for he would rather be dead than live in such torture. I told him it was very wrong to express himself in such a way; that he had much to be thankful for; he was placed beyond the reach of poverty; he had no encumbrances, and no one to control his movements or curtail his pleasures. "You be right, sir," he replied; "but I am not so well off as I was some years ago. I can't look after things as I ought. My head is bad, and I am so weak I'm fit for nothing, and sometimes don't know what I be about. Can mind nothing—all confusion—and can't settle to anything as I used to do; but I know you will set me right, as you always have done. I think I want stronger medicine than ever to carry it off!" Now it is believed and maintained by some, eminent in the medical profession, that functional disturbance of the brain, producing morbid ideas (such as were apparent in Fooks), the result of long-continued disorder of the digestive organs, may pass into a state of organic change of brain substance. I do not think for a moment that such a change has taken place in Fooks's brain, but rather that a state of irritability of the nervous system frequently manifested itself in his case, and this, from reflex action on the brain, led to the darkest thoughts and forebodings and despondency. During a paroxysm of this nature all imaginable evils and their causes are passed in review before this morbid mental vision, and in a frenzied fit the will resolves to get rid of the imaginary offender, and then to take his own life; and the body thus obeys the command of a morbid mind or will which it cannot resist. Had Fooks's victim not come in his way until this frenzied homicidal fit had passed over, it is most probable the fatal act would not have been committed; and that the deed was the act of a madman—morally mad for the time being—I have not the slightest doubt, this conclusion being strengthened by the attempt on his own life afterwards, which if he had succeeded in taking away, there can be no doubt that the verdict of a coroner's jury would have been "Temporary insanity."

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,
Weymouth, March, 1863. WM. SMITH, M.D.

CHOLERA IN INDIA, AND THE LATE CALCUTTA CHOLERA COMMISSION.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Under the head of "Parliamentary Intelligence" in THE LANCET of the 14th inst. a paragraph appears in connexion with the above-named subject, which should not be allowed to pass without comment.

It must be known to most of your readers that so long ago as the summer of 1861, a Commission, with Dr. McLelland at its head, was appointed at Calcutta to inquire into the great epidemic of cholera which had just committed such ravages in the Punjab and in the Valley of the Ganges, and to report upon the subject generally.

It will be seen from the paragraph to which I refer that on Friday, the 6th of March last, Sir W. Miles asked the Secretary for India if he had any objection to lay on the table the Report of the Commission, and any correspondence that had taken place between the Commission and the home authorities in reference to it. The reply was that no such Report or correspondence had been received.

This reply is no doubt true, but at the same time it is not easy to explain. In the first place, it is in direct contradiction to a statement which appeared in your columns in November last, to the effect that the Report had been received, and that, after being severely criticized by the medical advisers of the Government, it had been sent back to the Commission for revision and reconsideration. That both these statements cannot be true is clear enough.

What makes the whole thing the more strange is, that, if the public prints speak truly, the Commission itself has long ceased to exist. Some five or six months ago, it was announced in *The Times* that the secretary to the Commission had left India, and was coming to England by way of Persia. Mr. John Strachey, a leading member of it, was gazetted to a new appointment last autumn, and is understood to have left Cal-

cutta for the north-west of India some time ago, in order to enter upon his new duties.

In India great dissatisfaction has been repeatedly expressed at the non-appearance of the Report. In an article which appeared in the *Homeward Mail* in October or November last, the delay is ascribed to an irreconcilable difference of opinion amongst the members as to the fundamental points of their inquiry. But this, surely, is no valid excuse for the non-performance of the duty assigned to them. In the investigation of problems so difficult as that which concerns the propagation of cholera, it seldom happens that a commission composed of many members is unanimous in its conclusions. The universal practice under such circumstances is, that a report is drawn up containing the evidence, and embodying the views of the majority, while those of the dissentients are given in an appendix. At any rate, if there be some knotty point on which these gentlemen cannot agree, nothing would be lost by making it public.

Whatever the real facts may be, it is evident that in the working of this Commission there is a screw loose somewhere. As the public will have to pay the commissioners a large sum, it is at least entitled to the fruit of their labours. After what has transpired on the subject, it is high time that we should know whether the Report is to be forthcoming or not, and if not, what has caused so much time and money and the labour of so many eminent men to be spent in vain.

I am, Sir, yours &c.,
March 14th, 1863. INQUIRER.

VALUE OF ALKALIES IN RHEUMATISM.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I beg to thank your correspondent "M.D., Retrospectiens" for directing my attention to the paper by Dr. Furnivall in THE LANCET for 1844, respecting the value of alkalies in rheumatism. It is thoroughly to the point, and although it does not enter into the details of treatment, it foreshadows the results which were more fully elaborated in my work on Rheumatism.

Your correspondent seems to imply that, whilst recommending the use of alkalies, I ought to have made mention of the labours of those who in a greater or less degree have been instrumental in bringing the value of these remedies under the notice of the profession. In my work on Rheumatism I have done so, and have specially referred to the views of Dr. Wright of Birmingham, who is quoted by your correspondent. Dr. Furnivall's paper is not alluded to, for the reason that, until the appearance of the letter from your correspondent, I was not aware of its existence. But *clinical* lectures do not appear to me to be the proper channels for a discussion as to the share of different individuals in the introduction of various remedies. The subject-matter of such lectures should be strictly practical, and in close relation to the cases under consideration, and it has been my aim to exclude all other matters. Hence the omission of which your correspondent complains. If your correspondent will refer to my work on Rheumatism, he will find that I have not failed to "give honour where honour is due."

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,
Manchester-square, March, 1863. HENRY WM. FULLER, M.D.

DR. HUGHES BENNETT'S LECTURES.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Dr. Hughes Bennett, partly, I must admit, from my own indistinctness, has misunderstood my meaning. When I said that I was prepared to admit that the so-called molecules may arrange themselves in rows, I meant that they might accidentally come into contact and assume that arrangement, as they might any other form of grouping, definite or indefinite; not that from this they proceeded to grow together by a species of vital adhesion or coalescence, but that the production of vibrios is a consequence of the power each so-called molecule possesses of assuming the mode of linear segmentation.

These so-called molecules, are, I believe, either the results of a former segmentation, which have been deposited from the air, or the descendants of them, and, therefore, are minute subdivisions of cells, without, perhaps, any decidedly marked cell-wall, but certainly with an exterior possessing some degree of consistence, each capable, without any junction with its neighbour, of producing a fibril.

Each of these minute particles of vegetable matter (molecules) is certainly, to my mind, very different from those